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MEMORANDUM FOR:

Director of Central Intelligence

VIA:

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Deputy Director for Operations

FROM:

William F. Donnelly

Chief, Information Management Staff

Directorate of Operations

SUBJECT:

Report of Questionable Activity in Connection with Project PBSUCCESS

- 1. This memorandum reports the investigation by the Information Management Staff of a possible questionable activity in connection with a review of the records of Directorate of Operations project PBSUCCESS—the vehicle for the overthrow of the communist dominated regime of Guatemala in 1954.
- 2. While undertaking a systematic review for declassification of the records of project PBSUCCESS during June-July 1979, the Classification Review Division (CRD), Directorate of Administration, discovered a file entitled "Disposal List Guatemala". A memorandum in that file seemed to indicate that in September 1952 consideration had been given to killing 58 Guatemalan communists during a military action (presumably an overthrow of the Guatemalan Government) to be carried out by a Guatemalan exile group. The memorandum also called for the exile or imprisonment of 74 other Guatemalan communists. A second memorandum in the file, dated 31 March 1954, representing an updating of older lists, named 34 Guatemalan communists to be disposed of. The discovery of the file was reported by CRD to Chief, Information Management Staff, and in turn by him to the DDO on 11 June 1979. The Inspector General and the DDCI were also informed.

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Following the discovery, further review of project PBSUCCESS records by CRD surfaced an additional folder entitled T and seven other documents which referred to the subject of disposing of or eliminating Guatemalan communists. Two of the documents record conversations with Department of State officials in which the subject is mentioned. In one of these, a 29 March 1954 memorandum for the Department of State to discuss the results of a recent OAS conference and project PBSUCCESS. C ■ asked Mr. Mann if he had changed his thinking since the conference on the possible methods to get rid of the ARBENZ government. According to Mr. Mann repeated that in his opinion "the elimination of 30 of those in high positions of the government would bring about its collapse. He then qualified this statement by saying that perhaps even a smaller number, say 20, would be

4. A second memorandum for the record dated 3 June 1954 by Mr. Frank Wisner reporting discussions held with Assistant Secretary Holland seems to refer to the subject. The two were discussing a memorandum prepared by Mr. Tracy Barnes in which Mr. Anad presented as a possible alternative to the "originally conceived, carefully-timed paramilitary action, should that prove difficult of fulfillment," a contingency (underlining added) alternative of leaflet drops, specific sabotage, and possibly political assassination as a means of persuading the Guatemalan army to move against the regime. Mr. Treported:

sufficient."

Concerning one very sensitive type of treatment, which was raised directly for the first time by \(\bigcap \) In his memo prepared here, H considered this and ruled it out, at least for the immediate future, on the grounds that it would probably prove to be counter-productive. This decision was not conclusive and H suggested that we come up with more specific plans both concerning the individual targets, the timing and the statement of the purpose sought to be achieved with respect to each. This would require a fairly solid showing of the advantage to be gained by this type of activity.

- 5. There is no indication in the records of project PBSUCCESS, as reviewed by CRD, that the subject of disposal was pursued further. It never received Agency or State Department approval even as a contingency plan. To the contrary, the project as formally approved by the DCI on 12 November 1953 called for the removal covertly, and without bloodshed if possible (underlining added) the menace of the present communist controlled government of Guatemala. The removal was to be accomplished by bringing to bear a series of progressively heavier pressures including propaganda, economic sanctions, sabotage and finally, to the extent necessary, overt military action by a Guatemalan exile force aimed primarily at achieving the defection of the Guatemalan Army which in turn would bring about the President's resignation.
- As matters proceeded, not only was there no disposal of communist leaders during the operation, there was none after. The operation was successful in bringing about the defection of the Army. President Arbenz, who resigned in favor of a Junta, took refuge in the Mexican Embassy. Many other government officials sought similar refuge. Ambassador John E. Purerifoy negotiated a peace between the Junta and Col. Castillo Armas, leader of the Guatemalan exile force. Castillo Armas was subsequently appointed provisional president and allowed all political refugees to leave the country. President Arbenz was granted political asylum in Mexico. One hundred and twenty Guatemalan communists also The above events are matters of public record. As a check, the Information Management Staff traced the names of the 174 Guatemalan communists included in the various disposal lists. In no case did it appear that any of them died as the result of the upheaval in Guatemala.
 - 7. All portions SECRET.

| | € William | William F. Donnelly | | |
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| CONCUR: | 71 - 111 - - - 7 | 1 ² OCT ¹⁹⁷⁹ | | |
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